

Gayle Cheek Flanagan

By herself

A good life is one in which you live to get up more times than you fall down! And so far I've had that kind of a "good life"!

Jay (my older brother, the Historian) has asked me to write a short biographical sketch for the Flanagan Epistle that Jay and Cousin Martin Flanagan are compiling.

I was born in Farmville, NC at 211 East Church St. to Arch J. Flanagan and Mattie Gayle Cheek on January 19, 1933 at 8:05 PM. I was the third child of Arch and Gayle's children, older brother Jay, younger brother Harold and younger sister Sue. The oldest child (a daughter) was stillborn in 1929 – and Mama often remarked about her other baby in Heaven.

I was often referred to by my siblings (not complimentarily) as Little Momma. I was expected to help out at home and probably took my "duties" too seriously. My mother was a great teacher and I learned to cook, sew (sorry – never mastered tatting or crocheting), baby-sit, vacuum, dust etc. I often resented the responsibilities, but loved being obeyed by Jay, Harold, and Sue; and always relished the praise for "filling in" for my mother. I was never one to let even a minor inaccuracy be spoken to; even to the point of calling a spade a spade. Mama once said I was mean enough to push blind biddies in the creek! I am sure she meant "tough enough" however.

Graduating from Farmville High School in 1951 and from East Carolina University in 1954, I realized my dream of becoming a teacher (just like my mother) when I was hired to teach third grade in Goldsboro, NC. I had been interviewed in Greenville where everyone on the various school boards knew my daddy (Arch Flanagan). I proudly told Daddy I'd been hired in Goldsboro where no one knew, nor cared, who Arch Flanagan was! That tickled Daddy to know how proud I was not to be recognized as Daddy's daughter and given any differential treatment! He treasured someone wanting to achieve something on their own cognizance and terms.

Harvey Landis Davis, Jr. and I married on June 26th, 1955 At Farmville Christian Church. Harvey's Dad was the Methodist minister in Farmville and I met him through my older brother, Jay. Harvey and I both taught school in Goldsboro and went on to earn master's degrees from ECU. We had two sons, Landy (Harvey Landis, III) in 1957 and Lee (Lee Flanagan Davis) in 1959. Harvey was a principal for 34 years and I taught elementary school for 33 years. Harvey died on February 21, 1993.

I developed a friendship with Jack Hamlin Smith, a retired Naval Academy professor whose wife had died six months prior to Harvey. Jack had two sons, Clifford in Hawaii and Lloyd, an ER doctor in Goldsboro. Jack and I were married on December 10, 1994 at St Paul Methodist Church with our children as attendants. We were married for eleven years. (Jack died on Jan.11, 2006--six days prior to his 82nd birthday.)